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TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL

December 11, 2017

Honorable Mayor Sam Liccardo and Members of the City Council
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street, 18th Floor
San Jose, CA 95113

Dear Mayor Liccardo, Vice Mayor Carrasco, and Councilmembers, Arenas, Davis, Diep, Jimenez, Jones, Khamis, Nguyen, Peralez and Rocha,

RE: Item 4.1 – Bridge Housing Communities

On behalf of our members, we write today in support of the staff recommendation to take steps to develop up to three Bridge Housing Communities (BHC) to provide shelter for unhoused individuals. We acknowledge that the BHC model is not an inexpensive option, but as pointed out in the staff report, it is preferable to transitional models like sanctioned encampments. And, while other options like master leasing and rapid rehousing are potentially less expensive, they are difficult to implement in this high cost, low vacancy apartment rental environment.

While we support the staff recommendation, we make the following additional recommendations:

1. Make efforts to shorten the development timeline

We are concerned that the proposed timeline for implementing the BHC effort is too long, especially given the January 1, 2022 sunset date. Continued efforts should be made to find a way to bring the units on line in less than a year, as currently proposed. Given the AB 2176 sunset date, the current staff estimate of a full year of planning and development would mean the communities would only be operable for three years.

2. Identify a funding source for homeless programs that does not take away funding from other priorities

The cost of providing shelter-- whether interim or permanent-- for the City's homeless residents is significant. We are fortunate that the County's voters saw the need for permanent options and supported Measure A last November. But funding to provide shelter options until permanent options are found is lacking. The Housing Department has been creative in finding funding for pilot efforts and other more immediate options, but this funding is limited and takes away from other priorities, including permanent housing options.

3. Pursue extension of AB 2176 now

As noted above, the sunset clause for AB 2176 will severely limit the effectiveness of the program as a bridge between temporary and permanent affordable housing. While the City and the County are working hard to increase the supply of permanent supportive housing, we don't expect that sufficient numbers of units will be ready for occupancy before the sunset date. There will still be a significant need for interim housing options. With this in mind we would recommend that the City actively pursue the extension of the legislation now to extend the life of the BHC Program.

4. Continue to pursue a range of solutions to address the lack of interim options for people experiencing homelessness

BHC homes are a humane alternative to living on neighborhood streets or along the City's many waterways. But given the magnitude of the homelessness emergency, it is clear that this solution will only help a small number of the City's unhoused population. The Council and staff must continue to explore and pursue different responses, including opportunities to create safe parking locations for cars and RVs.

We know that identifying solutions for the homeless crisis our community faces presents many challenges, including siting, funding, and timing. We also know that there isn't just one solution, and that it is important to consider a number of alternatives in response. However, we believe that moving forward to approve the BHC program is a critical and important step.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pilar Lorenzana



Deputy Director